

Paul LAWLESS Claremorris

From Knock, and Teaching Maths and PE in Ballyhaunis Community School, Paul Lawless is campaigning to save rural Ireland which he says has been 'completely neglected' and starved of resources by a Dublin-centric government.

Paul was recently appointed Peace Commissioner and is well known for his 'Cataract Bus' initiative which sees people from Mayo transported to the north of Ireland for cataract procedures, rather than waiting on endless waiting lists here.

Paul plays with Aughamore GAA and was driven into politics after becoming frustrated with the fact that so many young people are being forced to leave rural Ireland.



Providing Health Care through the Cataract Bus

In 2019 Paul Lawless founded the Mayo Cataract Bus. Since then, Paul has helped hundreds of people across the county access healthcare in a timely fashion. The initiative has helped the most vulnerable restore their sight.

Paul has also helped people access health care in the north for a range of different procedures including hip and knee replacement. The cost of the procedures are largely reimbursed by the HSE under the legislation. If you, or a family member are stuck on a waiting list or if you wish to book a seat on the next 'cataract bus', please contact Paul on 0860865117



BEEF, FERTILISER AND FARMING ISSUES

Aontú is the only political party which voted against the Climate Action Bill in the Dáil. We did so because we knew that it would lead to Carbon Tax and unfair penalisation of ordinary hard-working farmers in rural Ireland. The government's approach to climate change is flawed. It focuses almost exclusively on the stick and ignores the carrot. The government are actually replacing Irish agricultural production with foreign products that have a higher environmental cost. – They're trying to stop turf-cutting here, but are importing peat from Latvia.

The Mercosur Trade Agreement is the nail on the coffin for the Irish beef farmer. Brazilian beef is replacing Irish beef in the EU market – produced by way of wildfires, deforestation, and over-grazing, not to

mention the emissions associated with the transportation of the beef to Europe. The cost of farm fertiliser has been spiralling out of control. Many farmers are at their wits end, neck-deep in debt and operating at a loss each year. Aontú has introduced legislation in the Dáil which would ban the below cost sale of beef and force the supermarkets, the factories by law to give the farmer a fair price per beast.

GOVERNMENT IS WEAK ON CRIME



**Aontú Leader
PEADAR TÓIBÍN TD**

Ireland has the smallest per capita police force in Europe. For each year FG Minister Helen McEntee has been in office, the number of Gardaí has fallen. Hundreds of Gardaí are being attacked each year. Hundreds of Gardaí are resigning or retiring each year. There has been a collapse in young recruits seeking to join the force. This is leading to an increase violent crime and assault in Mayo.

The new Garda roster may lead to a loss of Gardaí from substations such as Ballyhaunis, Knock and Ballinrobe. The Claremorris district is already overstretched covering a vast area of south Mayo.

Paul Lawless will fight to ensure changes to the roster do not negatively affect Ballyhaunis, Knock and Ballinrobe stations.

AONTÚ 
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For assistance on local issues, contact Paul: Tel 086 086 5117 Email paullawlesspc@gmail.com

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HOUSING CRISIS

The government has locked the younger generation out of the housing market, thereby sucking the life and blood out of our country. Young people are now almost accepting as fact that they will never own a house in their lives. Government policies facilitated a housing bubble, followed by a housing shortage. These shortages have resulted in exorbitant prices and high rents, which in turn have contributed to huge increases in waiting lists for social housing, and homelessness. 12,441 people are now homeless in Ireland; 3,700 are children. This national shame is a far cry from our 1916 proclamation to “cherish all children equally”.

In Mayo there are 1,203 on the Housing waiting list and 1,523 on the Housing Transfer list. Aontú seeks to stop land-bank speculation. We have delivered Bills in the Dáil that would end Air BnB short term rentals squeezing families out of homes in towns above 10,000 people. We have fought for proper grants to be provided to bring some of the 9,000 derelict and empty homes in Mayo back into use.

Aontú believes that it would be in the council’s economic interests to get the vacant properties which are already owned by the council back into use. In the long run we could save a fortune and go some way towards alleviating pressure on the housing system and rental market in Mayo. The government need to build more houses. It is as simple as that. We need to elect politicians who know the building trade and who aren’t afraid of bricks and mortar and hard work.

CASH SERVICES SAVED IN CLAREMORRIS AIB

Last year Paul Lawless organised a campaign against AIB’s decision to change the Claremorris bank to a cashless branch. He organised a petition, which was signed by many locals and business owners in the area, to lobby both AIB and government who have a majority stake in the bank.

It was only in recent years where towns like Ballyhaunis and Kiltimagh both had two fully functioning banks in each town. All of those branches closed in recent years and their customers were told they would have to go to Claremorris. People were very afraid they might soon be told to go to Athlone or Tuam! The banking sector is in complete disarray with the withdrawal of KBC and Ulster Bank.

Aontú’s petition against the cashless move, was successful and the bank reversed its decision. The Aontú campaign to stop the NCT going cashless has also been successful.

MAYO HOSPITAL CAMPAIGN

Mayo
University
Hospital



In January Paul organised a demonstration outside MUH in Castlebar. Anyone who has spent time in the Emergency Department at Mayo University Hospital will be all too aware of the delays and danger posed to patients inside. The nurses on the frontline are doing a fantastic job in extraordinary circumstances, but they need better pay, conditions and more staff.

Nationally the health service has 700 consultant posts empty, 6,000 fewer hospital beds than in 2008, and 30% fewer GPs. Our population has increased dramatically in recent years but the bed capacity, investment, funding and staffing levels have not increased to match it.

Figures released to Aontú show that 2,131 people left the emergency department in MUH without being seen, which is a 78% rise from 2021 figures. When we compare the latest figures for 2022 to the 2019 pre-Covid figures we can see a 106% increase. People are dying due to the failure to invest in the health system.

Government is making the Cost of Living Crisis Worse

Irish electricity prices are the highest in Europe. The Government are jacking up the price of petrol and diesel for the 2nd time in just a few months. They will increase prices again in October with an increase in Carbon taxes. All of this comes on the back of a road toll increase on the 1st of July that is likely to be repeated at the end of the year.

None of this is an accident. These are deliberate attacks on drivers and commuters many of whom have no alternative mode of transport. Rich Ministers are purposefully pushing up energy prices on struggling families to reduce consumption. There is a cruelty to the government approach.

Aontú is only party calling on the government to scrap the Excise Duty increases.



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